

Calamity Jane – The Rotherfield Players

One is tempted to start the review with phrases like ‘what a challenge’ and not an easy production for amateurs’, but no. The production was far beyond any qualifications like that. It was quite simply a first class, professional and thoroughly enjoyable evening’s entertainment. From the rousing opening, though the many familiar and well-loved songs, to the multiple happy endings, it was a magic evening.

Rotherfield Players have always had a core of strong, reliable and energetic thespians – they now appear to have not only the core but the whole apple! Every performance was active, strong and confident. The director, musical director and choreographer – Alison organ, Suzanne Burnett and Catherine Fenwick respectively, produced a show that entertained, charmed, amused and made me totally involved and believing in the characters – not something that always happens on village stages.

I loved the use of not just the stage (which incidentally never felt crowded) but also at times the whole hall, and for example, Calamity and Bill finally falling in love became a wonderful moment of close and shared intimacy.

With a cast of twenty-eight it would be impossible to mention everyone individually, so to start with – you were all brilliant. However I have to mention the following. First of all, Kate Organ WAS Calamity Jane. In the future when I see her in the village I shall be totally non-plussed if she isn’t wearing buckskins. Barry Shyvers’ Wild Bill Hickock was totally in character – and that voice! Becky Syms was superb as a lovely and desirable Kate Brown with so much attention to moves and expression, especially when in duet with Chris Walton as the handsome Lt. Danny. Steven Spelding was a wonderfully comic Francis Foyer and I shall treasure the memory of him dancing in his high heels in drag. And what a trouper Deirdre Cornford was with her portrayal of Henrietta Miller. It was so good to see also the trio of youngsters in the cast – all boding well for future productions. A quick mention of Lyn Lunn who made so much of her minor, but vital role as Flo the Barperson (what I used to call barmaid but is presumably non p.c. these days.) Oh and of course the Orchestra. How good to see a six piece ensemble, and how well conducted by Suzanne. And finally the costumes – such colour and so many changes – a real credit to Hazel Buck and her team, and well done James Gallifant and his team for such smooth transitions (and for the raked seating).

To sum up, a joyful and enjoyable evening in my own village. I can’t wait for the next one.

Andy Miller